

would justify it, I would have thought: That is optimism beyond what I can muster. But it has happened. And all throughout this country called Iraq, people are beginning to reconcile themselves because of better security. Quite frankly, they are war weary.

But I am not going to reinvent history. The blame is across the board and across the aisle. How many times did Republicans go to Iraq after the fall of Baghdad, for maybe 3 years, and say: It is really going well, it is just the media's fault. It was not going well, and it was not the media's fault. The strategy was failing. So people on my side of the aisle were cheerleading for a strategy that, if we followed it, we would have been hopelessly lost in Iraq. So there is plenty of blame to go around. Finally, we now have adjusted. We have a new general with a new strategy. It is a lot more complicated than just 30,000 new troops. We are deploying them differently. We are going after the insurgency in a different way.

The biggest nightmare for al-Qaida has been the surge. If you ask to pick winners and losers of the surge, it would be extremist groups. At the top of the list would be al-Qaida, and it is soon going to be the Shia militia aligned with Iran. There is an offensive about to take place in Iraq that is going to put the nail in the coffin of extremist groups. They are not defeated yet, but they are greatly diminished.

Now is not the time, colleagues, for us to put this surge in jeopardy. Our troops are in a political crossfire here at home. They are not in the middle of a heated sectarian war. Security does exist in Iraq now to get business done. There are extremist groups, and it is still dangerous, but the military has done its part to allow the Iraqi people to reconcile themselves.

We have not done our part. We are still fighting a battle as if nothing new has happened. We are still holding on to positions stated in April and May as if nothing has changed, and that is not fair to those who sacrificed to make it change. I took this floor for a very long time with Senator McCain and a handful of others arguing that the Department of Defense had a strategy doomed to fail. Thank God the President changed course. Thank God for General Petraeus and all under his command.

Now, to my colleagues on the other side, please let us allow General Petraeus to finish the job he started. Within a few months, the troops begin to come home based on the surge being successful. They will return with victory at hand. Victory is not yet achieved, but it is possible. The only way to roll back the security gains is to change the mission and have the Congress start running the war.

The political crossfire I speak of is that some people want to give the money to support the surge only if they get \$11 billion of domestic spending unrelated to the military. Some people will not give any money for the surge, continued operations in Iraq, un-

less we change the mission and withdraw troops by the end of the next year. That is a crossfire politically that is doing more harm than good that should end.

Beginning in March, General Petraeus will come back. He will tell us the situation as it exists on the ground. I am here to tell you, in December, that I am disappointed in the progress at the central government level in Baghdad. They have passed a budget in Iraq—\$48 billion. All revenue being shared among all groups is a great step forward, but it is not a permanent solution to the problem.

We need a permanent law, a national law, that will tell every group in Iraq: As to the wealth of the country, part of it will come to your area, and you do not have to worry about it budget by budget. Political reconciliation in Iraq has to happen for the surge to be successful. I have said on numerous occasions that if there is not some major breakthrough on the benchmarks by January, I will look at reconfiguring the aid we give to the Iraqi Government, not changing the troop missions or the troop numbers. I am going to leave that up to the military. It is in our national security interest to maintain the gains we have achieved on the ground to keep Iraq from going into chaos. But we are giving this Government hundreds of millions of dollars of aid, and if they cannot reconcile themselves, we may find other places to spend that money and other ways to spend that money.

So I urge my colleagues to allow the troop funding that is required to complete the surge, to allow it to go forward. Stop this political crossfire of trying to extract from this necessary funding event more money to spend domestically here at home or trying to take the mission away from the military commanders. That is not where our troops need to find themselves in this crucial moment in time.

I can promise you, as we go into next year, if the central government in Baghdad has not done a better job reconciling themselves, I will sit down with anyone, Republicans and Democrats alike, to find a way to put political pressure, economic pressure, on this government.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I want to acknowledge my colleagues who have been helping on S. 2045. These are in alphabetical order, not in the order of work done. Everybody has worked a lot on different parts of this bill. They are Senators BROWN, CASEY, DURBIN, HARKIN, INOUE, KLOBUCHAR, MENENDEZ, BILL NELSON, and SCHUMER. They have all helped craft this legislation relating to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Because we are now in the holiday season, naturally, public attention is focused on consumer product safety. I had come today prepared to ask unanimous consent to try to move to this legislation. However, last week, Thursday, I met with Al Hubbard at the White House in a very constructive meeting to talk about some of the areas of disagreement on the legislation, as it came out of the Senate Commerce Committee. It was a very constructive meeting, very frankly. I hope, in the end, we will consider that a very productive meeting. We don't know yet if there is a meeting of the minds, but I am cautiously optimistic that the White House is starting to engage in this very important issue to this country and to the families of America.

Let's talk for a moment about the Consumer Product Safety Commission. For a lot of people, the CPSC is just one of these "alphabet soup" agencies, and they don't know what the CPSC does. But I will tell you, it touches every American's life every day. It is in the small things that we use, such as batteries, coffeemakers, lawnmowers, toys, and baby cribs.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission is there to make sure these products are safe for people in my State of Arkansas to buy and for people all over this country to buy and use. One of the things the Consumer Product Safety Commission should do is give people in this country—including parents, when it comes to toys—peace of mind to know the toys they purchase and other products they purchase meet American safety standards.

This bill we are talking about today, S. 2045, was called recently by the Wall Street Journal "the most significant consumer safety legislation in a generation." I think that accurately sums up the nature of our legislation. It is consumer safety reform legislation. It is very significant, very comprehensive.

Our efforts in reforming the CPSC predate a lot of the recalls we heard about this summer. We have been working on this all year in the subcommittee. Basically, the CPSC now looks after 15,000 separate consumer products. Every year, there are about, roughly, 27,000 deaths in this country caused by consumer products that are faulty. There are 33.1 million people injured every year through consumer products that the CPSC regulates. So this is an agency that is a public safety agency, a good Government agency.

Unfortunately, the CPSC is completely overwhelmed today. I believe the Senate, the House, and the President should all work together to reauthorize this agency and put it back together again.

Let me give some examples from this year alone. This year there have been 37 million products recalled. Some people may say: Gosh, it is working because all these products have been recalled. First, a lot of those products should never have been imported in the

first place. A lot of them were recalled by the manufacturers, not the Government. In any event, we have seen stories about lead-coated Big Bird, Elmo, and Barbie accessories, and we have seen collapsing cribs and kerosene-filled toy eyeballs. We have seen building toys with small, very powerful, magnets that, when kids ingest them, cause problems. We have seen craft toys that contain the date rape drug. That is unbelievable, but we have seen in this country a craft set, or a craft toy, that contains the date rape drug. These products should never be in the marketplace to begin with.

Let me talk about the status quo for a moment. The status quo today, with this flood of imports coming into this country, is completely unacceptable. We should not stand idly by and allow these products to saturate our markets. There have been stories in the last few days about charities and charitable giving. One of the great organizations during this time of year is the U.S. Marine Corps. They do the Toys for Tots Program. They have been doing it for many years. Even when I was a kid, it was a big deal because there were always kids in the community less fortunate than I was. We would gather our toys around our house and take them down to a drop station, wherever it may be, and the Marines would sort them out and deliver them to kids who needed toys on Christmas morning or during the holiday season.

One of my staff members, Jason Smedley, is a marine. Yesterday, he went to DC to volunteer on the Marine Corps Toys for Tots, the big disbursing office. Unfortunately, what he found was that the donations to Toys for Tots are way down this year because parents and other donors don't have confidence in the toys they are giving because there might be something wrong with them.

Also, you find, as Jason told me, at the Toys for Tots location in Washington, DC, they have three-ring binders with all kinds of toy recall information in them. Every toy that comes in, they go through that book to make sure that toy hasn't been recalled. Does that sound efficient to anyone? No. That means the CPSC has not been able to do its job and protect our marketplace from these dangerous toys.

There was another story in our local paper, the Arkansas Democratic Gazette, yesterday where toy recalls have hurt in-state charities, the locally based charities. You see the same story there, where donations are down. It has been a very hard season for those people who are in that toy distribution operation during the holiday season.

There is a great leader in Arkansas, Hezekiah Steward. He is a reverend, and he runs something called the Watershed Human Development Center. People in our State call it the Watershed Project. He tries to meet the needs of the most needy in the Little Rock area. He does a great job. When I

was Attorney General, we had a program and we tried to donate as many toys as we could to Watershed and also to Toys for Tots. We tried to help the Watershed because they are touching people in the community that a lot of times fall through the cracks. Again, Hezekiah Steward is in that article yesterday in the Arkansas Democratic Gazette, saying the donations were down and they are having to screen the toys. It is basically a big mess.

In addition to that, I have talked to parents and grandparents in Arkansas, and they are telling me the same thing. They are saying: This holiday season, when we want to buy toys, we don't know what to trust anymore. If it says "made in China," we don't buy it. That is not a good screening process. Hopefully, most of the toys in the marketplace are safe today, but the public has lost confidence in the system we have now, and we in the Senate, in the U.S. House, and also in the White House need to do a much better job of giving the Consumer Product Safety Commission the tools it needs.

Let me talk a little bit about the Consumer Product Safety Commission and help lay out the problem. Here on this chart we see something that is very revealing. We see on the top chart the imports coming into this country. What we see on the bottom chart is the Consumer Product Safety Commission's staffing level year by year. One thing you will notice—this is very clear, and the numbers are unmistakable—is that starting in 1974, you see the general trend; it goes up and down a little bit, but the general trend is for imports to increase coming into this country. We all know that. Everybody in this body knows we have seen imports increase dramatically in the United States in the last few years. This is borne out on the chart.

Unfortunately, as the imports are going up, the staff at the CPSC is going down. You can see these numbers. Again, they are unmistakable. This is an agency in distress. If you look at what it was at its high versus what it is today, the numbers are unmistakable. The problem with the numbers is, when you see the low numbers like this on the staffing level, when you understand the situation their lab is in, where it is dilapidated and antiquated, and they are losing many people through attrition, you understand all the problems the agency has and that it is totally overwhelmed. When you look at this number, which is at an all-time low, and imports are at an all-time high, you know we have a problem.

In this body, we need to address that problem. There is no better time to address it than right now. Let me talk for a moment about what I think we need at the CPSC. We need a robust and proactive watchdog agency. We need to prevent toxic toys from ever landing on our shores and on our shelves. We need to be able to respond very quickly when there is a problem. We need to

have a system in place where we can punish the bad actors and punish the repeat offenders.

Again, I have been talking to the White House, and I want to be cautiously optimistic about what the White House told me on the phone and in meetings, but we all need to work together to try to get this done.

Let me run through some of the things that S. 2045 does. Basically, what we are doing is taking this agency that needs an overhaul, and we are overhauling it. What we are trying to do is increase the staff by nearly 20 percent over time. We are trying to upgrade their testing labs. We are trying to increase their agents at ports of entry, again, so the dangerous products never enter this country. We are trying to allow the States' attorneys general to be more like cops on the beat and help the CPSC enforce the laws in all 50 States, not just in one centralized location at the CPSC itself. We want to increase the civil fines and the criminal penalties. Also, as part of this, we want to do our dead level best to streamline the recall process. It takes too long, it is too secretive, and there are many examples of people dying as discussions are going on between the manufacturers and the CPSC on how a recall will be conducted. This is very important.

This bill bans lead in children's products. I think that is very important for the American public to understand. Right now, there is not a ban on lead in children's products. We know it is dangerous, and that is well documented. Our doctors, medical researchers, and scientists have told us that. So we need to ban lead in children's products.

This bill also allows the CPSC to select recall remedies. It doesn't leave it up to the manufacture or the bad actors. Not all manufacturers or retailers are bad. In fact, the supermajority of them are not. They are trying to do what is right.

At the end of the day, the CPSC needs to make decisions that are in the public interest—not some of these manufacturers and retailers and distributors, et cetera, and what is in their own corporate interests. We need a watchdog agency that will be there to protect the public interest.

This bill increases public disclosure. That is important because most parents have heard something on the news or read a little something in the paper, but they really don't have an easy way to know what is being recalled or exactly when it gets recalled. We want more public disclosure, and we want it to happen quicker.

Also, regarding children's products, we want a third party process, where a third party will certify that those products meet U.S. safety standards. We have that in a lot of other areas, such as electronics.

There are a lot of third-party certification processes that exist in the marketplace. We need that for children's products.

The last two or three things the bill does is it improves the tracking labels

on children's products. When we get a toy, and they say there is a recall, say, on a certain kind of doll, there may be 10 varieties of that doll. We may have bought a doll made a year ago and it has been in a warehouse. We don't know. We want a better labeling and tracking system.

We want to provide whistleblower protections. If there are people out there who know there is wrongdoing and somebody is covering it up—we see this in other contexts—we want to allow that whistleblower to come forward and not be punished for doing what is right.

The last point I wish to mention is the bill prohibits the sale of recalled products. Again, a lot of people in this country may be shocked to know that in many circumstances—not all—but in many circumstances, we see recalled products still for sale on the open market. Parents would be shocked to know that fact, but it is true.

We are trying to do our best, give our best effort to have a serious and fundamental reform of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

One more point in closing, and that is, there are two major goals we are trying to accomplish with this legislation. First, we are trying to rebuild the agency. That is very important for the functioning of that agency. As I said before, it is overwhelmed. I showed some charts. There are many others I can point out to show how overwhelmed this agency is. First and foremost, we want to rebuild the agency. And second—and this point flows from the first point—we want to restore public confidence in the marketplace. We don't want to be at the next holiday season and moms and dads are coming up to me in Arkansas and coming up to my colleagues all over the country saying: Should I buy toys for my children and grandchildren this year? That is what I hear when I go back home.

People are concerned, they are scared, they are uncertain about the American marketplace, and that is too bad. We do not need that to happen. We need our people to have confidence in the marketplace in this country.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in the House as well and in the White House, I ask everyone to give this legislation a serious look. We would like to move it forward this month, before the end of this year, during this holiday season. I know there are some folks who expressed interest in trying to help get that done. I am available any day, any night. My staff is available. We definitely want to work with whomever is willing to work to get the Consumer Product Safety Commission reauthorization done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: What is before the Senate at this moment?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further morning business, morning business is closed.

Mr. HARKIN. Morning business is closed and the Senate is back on the farm bill?

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2419, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 3500, in the nature of a substitute.

Harkin (for Dorgan-Grassley) amendment No. 3695 (to amendment No. 3500), to strengthen payment limitations and direct the savings to increase funding for certain programs.

Brown amendment No. 3819 (to amendment No. 3500), to increase funding for critical farm bill programs and improve crop insurance.

Klobuchar amendment No. 3810 (to amendment No. 3500), to improve the adjusted gross income limitation and use the savings to provide additional funding for certain programs and reduce the Federal deficit.

Chambliss (for Lugar) amendment No. 3711 (to amendment No. 3500), relative to traditional payments and loans.

Chambliss (for Cornyn) amendment No. 3687 (to amendment No. 3500), to prevent duplicative payments for agricultural disaster assistance already covered by the Agricultural Disaster Relief Trust Fund.

Chambliss (for Coburn) amendment No. 3807 (to amendment No. 3500), to ensure the priority of the farm bill remains farmers by eliminating wasteful Department of Agriculture spending on casinos, golf courses, junkets, cheese centers, and aging barns.

Chambliss (for Coburn) amendment No. 3530 (to amendment No. 3500), to limit the distribution to deceased individuals, and estates of those individuals, of certain agricultural payments.

Chambliss (for Coburn) amendment No. 3632 (to amendment No. 3500), to modify a provision relating to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program.

Salazar amendment No. 3616 (to amendment No. 3500), to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide incentives for the production of all cellulosic biofuels.

Thune (for McConnell) amendment No. 3821 (to amendment No. 3500), to promote the nutritional health of school children, with an offset.

Craig amendment No. 3640 (to amendment No. 3500), to prohibit the involuntary acquisition of farmland and grazing land by Federal, State, and local governments for parks, open space, or similar purposes.

Thune (for Roberts-Brownback) amendment No. 3549 (to amendment No. 3500), to modify a provision relating to regulations.

Domenici amendment No. 3614 (to amendment No. 3500), to reduce our Nation's dependency foreign oil by investing in clean, renewable, and alternative energy resources.

Thune (for Gregg) amendment No. 3674 (to amendment No. 3500), to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude charges of

indebtedness on principal residences from gross income.

Thune (for Gregg) amendment No. 3673 (to amendment No. 3500), to improve women's access to health care services in rural areas and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the delivery of obstetrical and gynecological services.

Thune (for Gregg) amendment No. 3671 (to amendment No. 3500), to strike the section requiring the establishment of a Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network.

Thune (for Gregg) amendment No. 3672 (to amendment No. 3500), to strike a provision relating to market loss assistance for asparagus producers.

Thune (for Gregg) amendment No. 3822 (to amendment No. 3500), to provide nearly \$1,000,000,000 in critical home heating assistance to low-income families and senior citizens for the 2007-2008 winter season, and reduce the Federal deficit by eliminating wasteful farm subsidies.

Thune (for Grassley/Kohl) amendment No. 3823 (to amendment No. 3500), to provide for the review of agricultural mergers and acquisitions by the Department of Justice.

Thune (for Sessions) amendment No. 3596 (to amendment No. 3500), to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a pilot program under which agricultural producers may establish and contribute to tax-exempt farm savings accounts in lieu of obtaining federally subsidized crop insurance or non-insured crop assistance, to provide for contributions to such accounts by the Secretary of Agriculture, to specify the situations in which amounts may be paid to producers from such accounts, and to limit the total amount of such distributions to a producer during a taxable year.

Thune (for Stevens) amendment No. 3569 (to amendment No. 3500), to make commercial fishermen eligible for certain operating loans.

Thune (for Alexander) amendment No. 3551 (to amendment No. 3500), to increase funding for the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems, with an offset.

Thune (for Alexander) amendment No. 3553 (to amendment No. 3500), to limit the tax credit for small wind energy property expenditures to property placed in service in connection with a farm or rural small business.

Thune (for Bond) amendment No. 3771 (to amendment No. 3500), to amend title 7, United States Code, to include provisions relating to rulemaking.

Salazar (for Durbin) amendment No. 3539 (to amendment No. 3500), to provide a termination date for the conduct of certain inspections and the issuance of certain regulations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, as Senators are well aware, we are now back on the farm bill. I again thank both leaders, Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL, for last week working together to reach an agreement whereby we will have 20 amendments, a maximum of 20 amendments. We don't have to have 20 amendments but a maximum of 20 amendments on each side. We now have a list, and we do have the amendments in order on the Republican side. There are 20 listed. I hope that maybe not all of them will require a vote. Maybe we can work some of those out so we will not require votes or much time on any of those amendments. Senator CHAMBLISS and I are working together to try to get some hard-and-fast